

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union ♦♦♦ www.fbu.org.uk

October 2011

READY FOR ACTION

**Pension ballot
looks inevitable
See pages 4, 6–13**





Matt Wrack

Available to talk, but ready to fight



The Trades Union Congress took place in London in early September. I am sure you will have seen or read coverage of the debate on pensions.

What this debate reflected was the widespread and growing anger at the UK government's relentless attacks on our pensions.

We argued that the political class and the cabinet of millionaires – who do not suffer the same pressures we do to pay the bills, or worry about making ends meet – have no right to take from us what is rightfully ours.

They have no right to

penalise us for wanting a dignified retirement and for not dying young enough to suit their balance sheets.

At the TUC, union after union outlined the current failure of negotiations as the government simply tries to force through its attacks.

But union after union also announced that they were making plans for industrial action.

This debate was predictably condemned by coalition ministers and by the right-wing media, but the anger expressed at congress reflected the anger of millions affected by these attacks.

Our case – making use of the experts

In our own discussions, we have been finalising our case against the various strands of the attack on us. We have deliberately used external advice and expertise in this. We have produced a report exposing the weaknesses in the government's financial and economic case.

We have prepared evidence supporting the case against a "normal" retirement age of 60. And we have produced a range of evidence from actuaries challenging the government's financial case.

In other words, we have not just relied on our own

information, or on the fact that these attacks are unfair – as they are. We have systematically prepared to demolish the government's case. I am confident that, if we are given the chance to negotiate properly, government officials would be forced to acknowledge the strength of our arguments.

Trade disputes – sometimes it comes to conflict

Unfortunately, these matters are not just decided by logic or reason or argument. This is one of those times. The government is currently determined to force its changes through. That is why we registered trade disputes for all parts of the UK immediately following the TUC debate.

As we go to press, it increasingly looks like we will need to take the next step and to ballot members for strike action.

There is still a chance to avoid conflict. We have asked ministers and their officials for serious talks around our concerns and our various pieces of evidence. I sincerely hope they will take up that offer.

But if they don't – or if they refuse to move – then we will need to be ready for a fight.

All the reports we have coming in from around the UK are that our members are overwhelmingly ready for such a fight if it is needed.

And, if so, we will be part of a huge campaign across the trade union movement as working people demand justice and decent pensions for all.

Hands off our pensions.

STEFANO CAGNONI



TUC delegates, with the FBU in the foreground, vote for action on pensions

"It increasingly looks like we will need to take the next step and ballot members for strike action"

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LETTERS

Linda Shanahan, 1952-2011



It is with great sadness that I write to tell you of Linda Shanahan's death.

Linda was one of the trailblazers in the FBU on behalf of women. Not only was she the first woman to be a brigade secretary (in Fife). She was also the first FBU member to receive the meritorious award from the Scottish Trade Union Congress.

Her work on setting up first the woman's advisory structure, the precursor of the FBU's women's section, and then the women's section itself, will be written in the future history of our movement. Linda was one of the main drivers in both of these and her contribution was immense.

With the coming of the Scottish parliament and the rise in attacks on fire crews, Linda (as the FBU's STUC general council member) was given a role to work within government on behalf of the trade union movement to assist with the Emergency Workers Act. This law made it an offence to attack or abuse an emergency worker in the execution of their duties. In recent years, Linda worked full time with the Scottish government to progress this policy to cover all workers.

Linda touched so many people's lives and in such a positive way. Her commitment to international socialism was born with her and brought forward by people like Ken Cameron and Ronnie Scott, two people she admired greatly.

In her life Linda suffered injustice. She chose to fight and continue fighting to make the world a better place. The FBU would not be the union it is today without the influence, expertise and dedication of Linda Shanahan, a comrade to us all who will be sadly missed.

Roddy Robertson, executive council member for Scotland



Matt Wrack: Government pension plans are a 'crude smash and grab'

Union takes first step to ballot for action for fair pensions

Pensions

The Fire Brigades Union has told ministers in the Westminster government and the devolved administrations to deliver fair pensions in the fire service or face a strike ballot of the union's 43,000 members across the UK.

The move came after the Westminster government published its plans to impose increased pension contributions of between 3.2% and 6.2%, a move that will cost every firefighter between £2,000 and £7,500 by 2014.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "These plans are a crude smash and grab raid on firefighter pension rights to help pay for the budget deficit. It is nothing to do with long-term sustainability or affordability.

"The huge rise in contributions will cost our emergency fire crews between £2,000 and £7,500 by 2014. It's daylight robbery to demand these sums."

The deficit was caused by the near collapse of the banks and the need for huge public borrowing to bail them out.

Wrack said: "We're already facing a pay freeze at a time of raging inflation and major frontline cuts. The impact on morale will be devastating. This is a toxic brew for the fire service.

"Fire crews will not pay for the mistakes of the chancellor's banking friends, who brought the public finances to this state. It is unfair to demand that we pick up the bill.

"We have not sought a confrontation on this issue, but fire crews are furious at these plans and the failure to deliver a positive agenda of fair pensions across the board.

"We hope that ministers will reject them and, instead, back our members' proposals for pensions based on equality.

"When we ballot we expect a high turnout and a high 'yes' vote for industrial action."

Government plans for your pension

→ A **3.2% increase** in contributions for all firefighters

→ This will mean around **£2,000** over the next three years

→ Tiered contributions of up to **6.2%** for officers, as much as **£7,500** over the next three years

→ All firefighters to **work to 60**; control to **68**

→ Scrapping **all schemes** in 2015

→ Every fire-fighter will **pay more, work longer and get less for the rest of their career - if the government gets away with it.**

Dave Turner:
Overwhelmed
by the response
of members

www.fbu.org.uk

'Sickening silence' over fire service cuts

Civil unrest

The Fire Brigades Union was "sickened" by the silence of politicians over fire service cuts as they praised the way crews dealt with fires during the August unrest.

Politicians queued up to question police cuts, but none has yet challenged cuts to the fire service.

FBU assistant general secretary Andy Dark said: "Fire crews are angry and sickened by the silence on widespread frontline fire service cuts. We are already stretched and struggling and that will only get worse."

The union was inundated by complaints from fire crews working in



Cameron in Salford – quick for a photo-op and quick to cut

areas of the August unrest.

The last wave of cuts saw the loss of 1,000 frontline firefighter posts.

The cuts are concentrated on full-time fire crews in largely urban areas, some of which bore the brunt of recent unrest.

August showed how easily and quickly fire services can be stretched and struggle to cope. The

disturbances, like others in the past, saw widespread and major arson.

Dark said: "Claims that fire services can fall back on each other and pool resources don't stand up when the cuts are widespread. The overall pool of frontline resources is being drained away and it will get worse year after year."

High profile for FBU at TUC

TUC

The Fire Brigades Union had a high profile at the last month's TUC Congress, speaking in the major debates and attracting media interest.

General secretary Matt Wrack spoke in the main debates on the economy, pensions and anti-fascism. He savaged the "feral class" of Britain's bosses: "Because what we've seen so far in response to the economic crisis is the privatisation of gains, but the socialisation of any losses. We need a banking service that is aimed at serving people, rather than a casino for billionaires."

Andy Noble spoke on public services, explaining the FBU's opposition to the privatisation of the fire and rescue service. He ridiculed AssetCo directors for spending "more time in the courtroom than they do in the boardroom".

Rose Jones seconded an emergency

resolution on the August riots. She condemned the attacks on firefighters by rioters and exposed the hypocrisy of the government for cutting the service while praising firefighters' bravery.

FBU president Alan McLean moved the main international motion on Egypt. He said trade unionists in Britain "drew inspiration" from the new independent workers' movement in Egypt and pledged the union's "support and solidarity".



FBU delegation (l to r): Andy Noble, Rose Jones, Denise Christie, Dave Green, Matt Wrack and Alan McLean

SOUNDING OFF

'Anger and indignation' at pensions meetings

Dave Turner, brigade secretary, Tyne and Wear

In Tyne and Wear we decided on a "blitzkrieg" approach to branch meetings. So, along with brigade chair Russ King, we organised all our branch meetings over a three to four week period, all attended by at least one brigade official. This was a relatively simple exercise geographically due to the compact nature of Tyne and Wear.

After a shaky start, the meetings progressed amazingly well. The interest and outright anger and indignation was obvious. It was at times frustrating, because a lot of members struggled to accept that a government would treat public sector workers, and fire service staff in particular, in such a despicable manner. The recurring themes were: how can they do this to us? Is this legal? Have they not got a conscience?

Attendances became startling and, on occasion, well over 90%. They certainly exceeded those leading up to the pay dispute in 2002. By the end of the series of branch meetings, both I and the brigade chair were overwhelmed by the response of the members in Tyne and Wear. We had an average attendance of over 83% with only a handful of members unwilling to support the executive council resolution.

The meetings also proved to be an invaluable recruiting tool for the FBU, with a significant number of members who had chosen to leave for various reasons returning to the fold as they realised we are the only show in town and the only hope of opposing these immoral changes to all our pensions.

Another recurring theme was an overwhelming desire among younger members in the New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS) to leave the scheme. Fortunately, we managed to persuade them to remain in the scheme at present.

Overall, a very tiring but rewarding month. I can state with certainty that the members in Tyne and Wear will fight to protect our pensions.



THE £2,000 PENSIONS THEFT

FBU national officer Sean Starbuck explains why firefighters must be ready to defend our pensions

Government plans for firefighters' pensions are daylight robbery. They want us to pay more, work longer and receive less. This is completely unacceptable to firefighters and the Fire Brigades Union.

Firefighters already pay the highest contributions in the public sector for our pensions. Yet the government announced in September that it wants firefighters to pay contributions increased by 3.2%. This works out to around £2,000 over the next three years from every full-time firefighter straight to the Treasury with nothing in return. It applies to all fire service pension schemes.

This has nothing to do with making our pension schemes sustainable. It is a straightforward money grab. The government wants to fill a hole in its finances, to pay for the crisis caused by the bankers and their own mismanagement. Firefighters did not cause the economic meltdown, but are expected to pay to clear it up.

Further attacks

This is the first part of an attack on firefighter pensions. The government also wants to make all operational firefighters work until we are 60 and slash the amount a firefighter gets when they retire.

Pensions are deferred pay. Firefighters are entitled to a decent pension after giving our best years to public service. The government wants to slash

the pension we need for dignity in our retirement.

The FBU is exploring every political, industrial and legal avenue to oppose this great pensions robbery. The union has already told ministers in the strongest possible terms of our opposition to these proposals. We are liaising with other unions, MPs, pensioners' campaigns and other organisations. We are preparing for action on this issue and we want every member to become involved.

Schemes to be scrapped

Danny Alexander, chief secretary to the Treasury, announced on 19 July 2011 that public sector workers, including firefighters, are expected to pay at least 3.2% additional pension contributions, phased in from April 2012. The government plans to scrap our existing pension schemes after that.

Members of the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) currently pay 11% of salary – the highest contribution rate of any public sector pension scheme. This

equates to at least £250 per month for a competent firefighter.

Government plans mean that contributions by members of the FPS would rise by over 14% by 2014. A further imposition of tiered contributions is proposed, so some middle managers will end up paying 17% in employee contributions.

The New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS) also has high contributions

This has nothing to do with making our pension schemes sustainable. It is a straightforward money grab

Current annual contributions	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Extra contributions over three years
Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS)				
£3,102	£366 extra	£722 extra	£902 extra	£1,990
New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS)				
£2,397	£169 extra	£722 extra	£902 extra	£1,793
Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)				
£1,741	£343 extra	£686 extra	£858 extra	£1,887

compared with those of other workers in the public and private sectors. Members of the NFPS would also face a 3.2% increase in contributions imposed from 2012. Members also face the introduction of tiered contributions for middle and senior roles, despite this being a 40-year scheme with an employee contribution rate of 8.5%.

The Modified Scheme (for retained members who joined the service before April 2006) came about after the FBU fought for over eight years on a legal challenge to gain part-time status for retained members. Modified Scheme members are also expected to pay 3.2% extra contributions.

Control and other members in the Local Government Pension

Scheme (LGPS) are also expected to be paying contributions increased by 3.2% by 2014. The current level is 6.5%.

The tables give detailed indications of how much this is likely to cost firefighters. But it will cost around £2,000 over the three years or eventually £70 a month, depending on the scheme.

Officers will pay thousands of pounds more.

Living standards

These proposed increases must be put in the context of the current pay freeze, the rising cost of living and tax and benefit changes which will cost firefighters thousands of pounds a year.

They amount to an extra tax on public sector workers, imposed

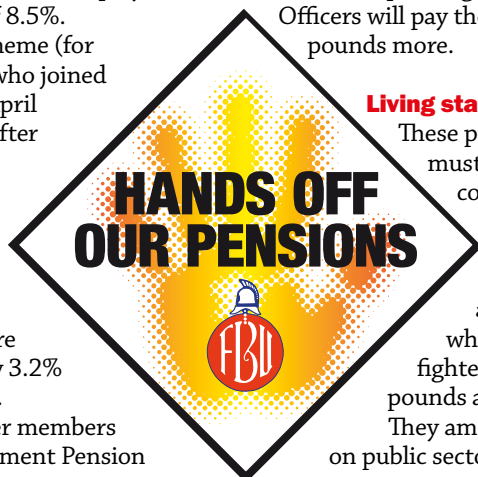
to fill a hole in the public finances.

The retail prices index (RPI), the long-standing measure of inflation, increased by 5% over the past year. Prices for basic necessities have risen fast recently. Food, petrol and energy are all driving the cost of living up. Meanwhile, we have to pay more for services that have been slashed. VAT and National Insurance have also gone up.

The attacks on pensions and pay, together with the tax rises and public services cuts, amount to the most savage assault on working people's living standards for generations.

That is why over 90% of firefighters surveyed this year told the YouGov polling organisation they were opposed to the government's pension attacks. Millions of other public sector workers are facing the same attacks.

That is why the Fire Brigades Union says we must be ready to defend our pensions, with industrial action if necessary.



The FBU: your voice



“ Now they want us to work longer, pay more and get less. This isn't just an attack on our pensions. It's also an attack on our standard of living, if we allow them to

bulldoze us over with this attack.

We need to all stand shoulder to shoulder and show them that we are not willing to accept these proposals. If they still don't listen then we need to down tools and go on strike. We may have to suffer a little hardship throughout the fight, but it will be worth every penny lost if we can keep what we've got. Unity is strength. ”

Carl Petch, brigade B&EMM rep



“ It is absolutely vital that FBU members take action in protest at the government's plans to amend their pension scheme. This is not about members demanding anything over and above what has already been agreed, but about a government demanding more from us. If we won't defend our future, then no one else will. ”

Cerith Griffiths, Wales regional chair

“It's our money, it's our savings. The pension schemes belong to the people who have paid into them. It's time to stick together and realise why we need to take action.”

Sue Offland, CSNC secretary



Members rally in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, 30 August 2011

“ These changes also threaten the future job security of every FBU member. Are we to be thrown on the scrapheap in our fifties when an operational role is physically beyond us?

I am sure we all realise it is time to fight back. We held a successful lobby in Kirkcaldy last month. We owe it to ourselves and our families not to allow the Westminster government to stage the greatest pensions robbery since Maxwell stole most of the *Daily Mirror* pension fund. ”

John McFadden, Strathclyde brigade secretary

“ Since conference we've carried out an unprecedented consultation with our members. I have visited dozens of branches and watches. This process has seen our membership rise in Northern Ireland.

It has ensured that our members are fully informed, empowered to lobby those outside the service for our pension campaign.

Our officials have been at the forefront of Northern Ireland's political campaigning on the pension question, including at ministerial level.

The process of lobbying, negotiating and campaigning is far from over. We will continue to work day in and day out, not to mention those late nights, to try and achieve the best result possible for our members. ”

David Nichol, Northern Ireland fairness at work rep





ice on pensions



Kirkcaldy rally,
30 August 2011

“The process of lobbying, negotiating and campaigning is far from over. We will continue to work day in and day out, not to mention those late nights, to try and achieve the best result possible for our members.”

David Nichol, Northern Ireland fairness at work rep



FBU reps at Lisburn fire station in Northern Ireland with (front) Jeffrey Donaldson MP and Legislative Assembly Members Paul Givan, Brenda Hale, Jonathan Craig and Edwin Poots



“It’s our money, it’s our savings. The pension schemes belong to the people who have paid into them. I have paid my contributions to the LGPS for the past 34 years. Why would I agree to all these changes? It’s time to stick together and time to realise why we need to take action.”

Sue Offland, CSNC secretary

“I am a passionate campaigner and I think it is really important for women to be at the forefront of the pensions campaign as the impact can sometimes be much greater. I am a retained firefighter and I will fight to keep the pension I signed up to.”

Hannah Burkitt, retained firefighter, Notts

“The increase will be of no benefit to me. It is just the government taking £80 out of my wage packet. The proposal to increase the retirement age to 60 has become a major talking point around the mess tables in Northamptonshire, with a lot of members questioning whether it is worth staying in any of the fire service pension schemes.”

Kevin Mills, firefighter, Northamptonshire



“I feel physically sickened and violated by the theft of my pension. I don’t feel like a victim. I can take action. The FBU and wider trade union movement are all opposing the theft together. Collectively we can and must stand to defend our future. If that means taking industrial action including strike I will vote yes.”

Kieron Hall, firefighter, High Wycombe

“Our members in Yorkshire and Humberside are making it very clear they are not prepared to just stand by and accept these attacks on their pensions. This government leaves FBU members with no alternative but to make a stand and ultimately take industrial action to fight these attacks.”

Pete Smith, regional secretary, Yorkshire & Humberside

“Using the financial crisis as an excuse is scraping the barrel. Our pensions were never invested, but were paid for each and every year by every one of us. So where is the money? We have worked hard, paid for and fully deserve the pension we were promised. Leave our pensions alone!”

Peter Allison, firefighter, London



PAUL MCCRANE/BIOMBERG NEWS/GETTY IMAGES

A wholetime watch manager will be expected to give the Treasury around £2,500 in additional contributions, with even less to show for it when they finally retire

Officers hit for six

**(£6,000
THAT
IS)**

The Westminster government's cash-grab on public sector pensions will cost officers £6,000 over three years, starting from April 2012. The government wants to phase in extra contributions of £100 a month, rising to over £200 a month by 2015.

The government plans to make these increased contributions a permanent part of a new firefighters' pension scheme and to make every firefighter work until 60.

To add insult to injury, it plans to scrap our final salary schemes and reduce pension payouts, with officers hit hardest by these changes.

The Fire Brigades Union says: hands off our pensions!

They want your money

The government plans to make all firefighters pay up to 3.2% extra contributions. It intends to phase in these increases over three years. This will cost every full-time firefighter around £2,000 over three years, or over £70 a month.

The government plans to hit officers even harder. It wants to impose additional contributions up to 6.2% for "higher earners". These so-called "tiered"

contributions are also intended to be phased in over three years, with different increases depending on rank or role.

Government plans indicate that even junior officers will face massive increases, while middle managers are expected to shoulder an astronomical burden.

£5,000 extra

A wholetime watch manager will be expected to give the Treasury around £2,500 in additional contributions, with even less to show for it when they finally retire. This ends up being almost £100 per month by 2014 – and for the rest of their career if the government can get away with it.

A wholetime station manager on flexi-duty is expected to pay 5.2% additional contributions by 2014. The extra contributions over these years

amount in total to over £5,000. This will amount to additional pension contributions of £200 per month from 2014, on top of current contributions in excess of £400 a month.

For a group manager on flexi-duty, the government expects an extra £6,000 to be paid over three years, or nearly £250 in additional contributions every month to the end of the manager's career.

“This attack on our pension is immoral, financially unsupportable and it is our duty to defend against it. This government has let down all the emergency services. CFOA is thunderously silent in speaking out over this attack.

Ged Phelan

Merseyside officers' section secretary

Contributions 2011	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Extra contributions over three years
Wholetime group manager				
£6,129	£1,560 extra	£2,005 extra	£2,897 extra	£6,462
Note: Salary figures do not include local allowances. Middle manager salaries include 20% flexi-duty. Calculations assume no pay increase over the three-year period.				



FBU defends **retained** firefighters' pensions

The Fire Brigades Union is appalled by government attacks on retained firefighters' pension rights and is determined to resist them.

FBU members won the right for retained firefighters to join the modified pension scheme following an extended legal battle.

But the Westminster government is still dragging its heels on implementing these changes, while rushing through attacks on firefighters' pensions.

Now the government is planning to move the goalposts and dramatically

worsen the pensions of retained firefighters. It wants them to pay over £600 more over the next three years, work longer and still get less.

Contributions

The Westminster government is proposing to increase all firefighters' pension contributions by at least 3.2%, phased in over three years. This will cost a retained firefighter with £10,000 a year of pensionable pay over £600 over the three years, whether they are in the modified scheme or the New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS).

The government plans to close all firefighter pension schemes in 2015 and transfer all firefighters into a new scheme with much worse benefits and with a retirement age of at least 60.

It has already tried to change the way pensions are uprated for inflation, using the lower consumer prices (CPI) instead of retail prices (RPI). Even the government admits this will mean a 15% reduction in pensions.

Firefighters' pensions are not "gilt-edged" or "gold-plated". They are reasonable pension schemes, worthy of being protected and, in some aspects, in need of improvement.

Fire service pensions must reflect the firefighter's work.

The current retirement age reflects the nature of the job and is taken into account in the contribution rates which, along with the police, remain the highest in the public sector.

Current wage	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Extra contributions over three years
Retained firefighter with £10,000 a year of pensionable pay				
£10,000	£60 extra	£256 extra	£320 extra	£636

Commitment

Sacrifice and selflessness are attributes common to all who work in the fire and rescue service. Across the UK, retained firefighters often give massive levels of commitment, are often overworked, often short-staffed and always taken for granted.

Long hours, restrictions on leave and negative effects on family life and terms and conditions are commonplace.

The Fire Brigades Union has always been the union for all people who work in the fire service and the natural home for all uniformed employees of whatever role, duty system or job function.

Whether working in the control rooms, the departments or in the fire stations, the FBU has demonstrated its commitment to represent all – as individuals and collectively.

Retained firefighters give massive levels of commitment, are often overworked, often short-staffed and always taken for granted and their pensions are also under threat



IAN MARLOW

Control members threatened by LGPS changes

Firefighter control members in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) are being told to pay around an extra £2,000 in pension contributions over three years to help fill the hole in public finances. This will amount to an extra £70 a month by 2014.

Control members are expected to increase their contributions by 3.2% by 2014. Officers will pay considerably more. The latest information indicates that the government plans to make these increases permanent from 2015, so the additional payments will continue to the end of your career.

The government also wants to make all uniformed firefighters work until they are 60 and non-uniform staff carry on until the state retirement age.

Audacity

Ministers have had the audacity to argue that these “savings” will be used to keep council tax down for the whole community – it will not be ploughed back into the LGPS.

We know they are already shifting the balance of local government finances, so their rich friends pay less tax while vital services are underfunded.

The LGPS is a unique public sector pension scheme because it is “funded”. Pension contributions collected in the past have not been deposited in the general government accounts, but have been invested and reserved for future payouts.

It means the LGPS is currently considered “cash rich” – it is taking in more from contributions than it pays out in pensions. It is likely to remain in credit for the next 20 years, according to the government’s own projections. So there is absolutely no case to increase the contributions of LGPS members.

Many LGPS members are paid less than those in other public sector schemes. Over 70% earn less than £21,000. The government says some of

them will be exempt from the additional contributions – but firefighters are still expected to pay extra.

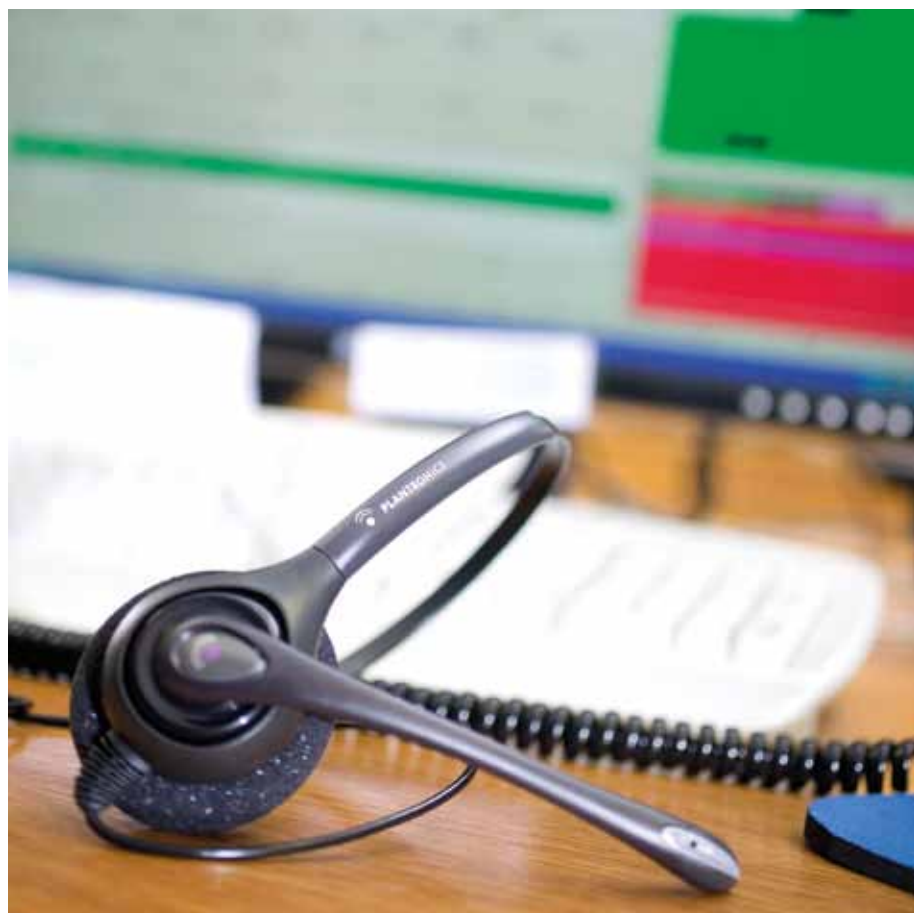
Opting out

The FBU fears that increasing the pension contributions of LGPS members will lead to many members opting out. Membership is already low in some authorities. Even a relatively small

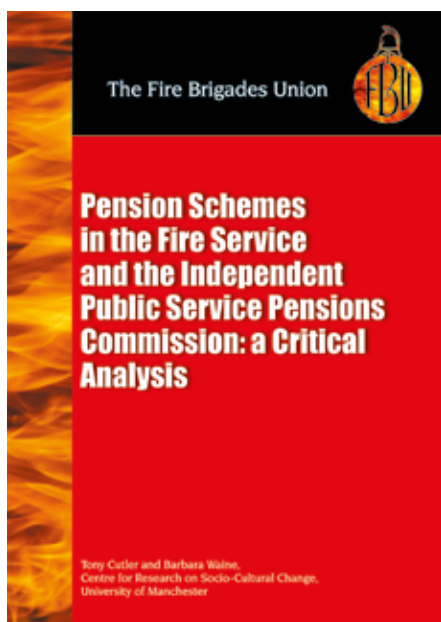
number of members opting out could have a knock-on effect on the viability of the overall scheme. So increasing contributions would be completely self-defeating.

For these reasons, the FBU will continue to defend its members in the LGPS and oppose government plans to make us pay more, work longer and get less.

Contributions 2011	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total extra contributions
Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) at 6.5%				
£1,741	extra £343	extra £686	extra £858	£1,887
Note: Based on 6.5% current contributions. Assumes continuing pay freeze.				



PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



What's **wrong** with Hutton?

Lord Hutton's pension report is part of the government's hatchet-job on public sector pensions.

FBU national official Sean Starbuck said: "Hutton's report is shaping negotiations going on now on all public sector pension schemes, so it is vital firefighters understand the arguments and why they are wrong."

An independent report, published by the FBU, explains the arguments in detail.

Work longer

Hutton argues that all workers should work longer before they get a pension. He said pensions should be paid at state retirement age (currently 65, but planned to rise), with the exception of uniformed services, where it should be 60.

The main problem with working longer in the fire service is that it ignores the very real health status of older workers. Firefighting requires high levels of physical fitness, which become harder to attain for older firefighters.

Hutton also ignores the lack of alternative roles for older firefighters within

the service. In recent years there have been fewer frontline firefighters but more non-uniformed staff employed by fire and rescue services.

There are hardly any opportunities for injured or ill firefighters to be redeployed into non-operational roles that would not mean reduced pay and conditions.

In a wider context, the notion that there will be more employment opportunities for older workers assumes a buoyant economy – not something we can rely on right now.

Career average schemes

Hutton argues that final salary schemes should be scrapped and replaced with career average (CARE) schemes. But neither Hutton nor the government has identified what the accrual rates for these new pensions would be.

Accrual rates are important as they relate length of service to the level of pension benefits. They are usually expressed as the percentage of annual income that "accrues" for each year worked.

A letter by health secretary Andrew Lansley, leaked to the *Daily Telegraph*

(20 July 2011), referred to an official government paper suggesting an accrual rate of 1/100th for public sector schemes. This is a rate that is "off the radar", since no existing pension schemes, public or private, have accrual rates worse than 1/80th.

Fairness

Hutton talks a lot about "fairness", but gives no definition of how fairness between public and private sector pension provision should be defined. Yet in the private sector, some employees pay 5.2% of salary – below LGPS, NFPS levels and less than half what FPS members pay.

Fairness is also about what employers pay. In the private sector, employers generally contribute in excess of three times employee contributions. For the FPS the ratio is 2.2:1 and for the NFPS 1.4:1. So firefighters pay more and the fire service pays less, compared with the private sector.

These arguments are important, as the government wants a race to the bottom on pensions, playing off public against private. The FBU says fair pensions for all.

AssetCo shows the folly of privatisation

Opportunities to privatise swathes of the fire and rescue service will take a big step further this autumn when the coalition government's Localism Bill becomes law.

The bill – set to get royal assent in October – gives England's fire and rescue authorities sweeping powers to meet their legal responsibilities by any method they choose while, at the same time, encouraging the introduction of charges for everything but core services.

The new law, combined with three more years of severe cuts in public spending, will make it much more attractive for cash-strapped services to sell off fire engines and equipment and outsource training programmes. Even core fire service work – and parts of the workforce – could be offered to private contractors using methods similar to those that other parts of local government use to contract out bin collection and street cleaning.

Vultures circling

And companies, not just in Britain, but from Denmark, the US, even those based and funded in offshore tax havens, have already spotted the change and are starting to size up new business opportunities. The charging system for other services – including animal rescue, a massive issue in rural areas – will make it even more attractive to private companies wanting to make quick buck for shareholders and directors.

These developments will pose a big challenge for the FBU in what may



Up for grabs? Fire service equipment at AssetCo's South Ruislip, west London, headquarters

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack attempts to speak to AssetCo strikebreakers at the London fire brigade's Southwark training centre during the union's dispute with the LFB in November last year



Investigative journalist David Hencke put the company that owned London's fire engines under the microscope and found disturbing signs that privatising a public service like firefighting is fraught with danger



JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



**AssetCo
strikebreakers
during the
London dispute**

become an unthinkable battle – to keep our highly professional fire service in public hands.

The London fire brigade (LFB) is moving to privatise its control room operation and authority chair Brian Coleman has been winned and dined by Falck, a Danish private fire service provider looking to break into the British market.

AssetCo

A foretaste of what could be to come is the long and disastrous relationship between the London and Lincolnshire fire brigades and AssetCo, a private provider of fire services, spun out of the privatisation of British Gas.

LFB's original 20-year public finance initiative (PFI) contract with AssetCo covers its fire engines and some 50,000 pieces of equipment and dates back to 2001. In 2009 London fire brigade negotiated a five-year deal with AssetCo which included the provision of strikebreakers used during the London strike last year. Lincolnshire's 20-year contract with AssetCo covers the provision of appliances and fire fighting equipment. It was signed in 2006.

Mismanagement

These contracts were expected to provide a steady income stream from the taxpayer and to be highly profitable. But, instead, AssetCo has become a byword for mismanagement and greed which has ended in a trail of over £100m of debt and near insolvency for the company itself. What is particularly disturbing – and this bodes ill for future privatisation of fire services – is that local authorities lack control over such private companies and have been left as helpless spectators watching this catastrophe unfold.

The essential nature of the fire service – graphically demonstrated by recent civil disturbances and earlier terrorist attacks, not to mention anything from a house fire to a major factory fire – make these developments all the more extraordinary.

Scandal

The AssetCo scandal started to come to light during its role as a strike breaking force last year. Questions were first asked about how qualified its workforce was to tackle fires and whether they would take the same risks to rescue people as firefighters employed directly by the LFB.

It soon became clear that, unless there was a senior commander from the LFB present at the scene, the contract between AssetCo and the LFEPA meant that it would not take these risks. This is hardly comforting for London residents.

But the real scandal emerged in March this year when it became clear that the company was in serious financial difficulty and faced being wound up because it could not pay its tax bills. It turned out that its co-founder and chief executive, John Shannon, who paid himself a fortune in dividends and drew a salary of £300,000 a year, had milked the company. His fellow co-founder

Frank Flynn was getting £250,000 a year.

This was embarrassing for Brian Coleman, the Tory chairman of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority, whose comments about firefighters being “thick” and “thugs” had raised many people's hackles. His hospitality declarations showed he had accepted a £350 Harvey Nichols hamper from Shannon and had been winned and dined at least three times.

Within just one month the company's share price fell to near junk status. It had to get investors to put up £26m to meet demands from the tax authorities and lawyers. Shannon was forced out in a boardroom coup, which also saw the chairman and a newly appointed Australian whizzkid finance director quit.

This was nothing compared with what was to come. Within three months AssetCo was back in court facing another winding up petition with its shares falling even further and its directors and ex-chairman about to start legal proceedings against each other. Then the real situation emerged.

Court

At a company court hearing, the AssetCo's submission on behalf of its directors and professional advisers was described by Registrar Briggs as “extremely unattractive”. He said it put “a gun to the head of the court” by threatening to “down tools” unless it received “a substantial amount of cash” to pay them in advance of a then-expected insolvency.

It was revealed that AssetCo, valued by the stock market at only £5m, was £140m in debt. It had not even paid its electricity bill and owed tens of millions to banks, including the state-owned Halifax.

As Mr Justice Floyd said at the following hearing: “If a takeover is not successful, then the assets of the company would look to be depleted by the professional fees being charged to the point where there will be nothing left in the kitty to reimburse creditors of any description.”

Takeover

The company struggled on after it said it was in takeover talks with Bahrain-based Arcapita Bank, and has had to raise another £10 million from overseas investors to keep afloat.

It emerged last month that it was now prepared to offer its trade creditors a deal to return 23p in the pound of their lost investment cash. And even then it is not certain that it can struggle on by itself without a further takeover.

**AssetCo has
been a byword
for greed
and mis-
management**



Wish you were here? Speculators in tax havens like the Cayman Islands (main picture) are allowed to buy and sell vital public services like firefighting. They will not be affected if a company like AssetCo fails. But fire cover in London and elsewhere is put at risk and creditors like the Inland Revenue in Nottingham or the taxpayer-supported Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) in Edinburgh are left to chase the millions they are owed through courts in the UK.

Its chairman, Tudor Davies, on £2,500 a day, has arranged to pocket a £300,000 fee if he succeeds, according to the document released to creditors to arrange the scheme.

What is particularly appalling is that the authorities have been totally complacent about this state of affairs. Gareth Bacon, Tory chairman of LFEPA performance management, sees no problem if the company does go into administration.

LFEPA has refused to release to the FBU details of what happens if administrators are called in – pleading confidentiality.

Desperate future

Yet, technically, the brigade will rely on the administrators to sort this out. What will happen if overseas investors in tax havens demand the disposal of assets, including London's and Lincolnshire's fire engines, to pay out their debts? They will not be affected in Bermuda if London and Lincolnshire do not have

equipment to fight fires.

The future of the company was looking increasingly desperate as *Firefighter* went to press. Its shares were suspended and it was seeking to raise another £14m to pay off trade creditors and safeguard contracts with the United Arab Emirates military command.

This diluted the value of the existing shares (worth only 1.75p at the time of the suspension) by an amazing 1000%.

The deal is likely to see AssetCo operations in Lincolnshire and London put up for sale, so breaking up the firm.

Even if a deal to save AssetCo in some form is reached, the company will still owe the banks £42m. And a nasty legal dispute is looming between the present firm and its former chief executive John Shannon, over his use of company money.

All this suggests that there are serious flaws in the whole process of privatising services that are not being addressed by ministers and top managers at the London and Lincolnshire fire brigades.

The authorities cannot abdicate responsibility for providing guaranteed fire cover for people and businesses.

The AssetCo example shows how what might appear to be a financially sound deal at the time a contract is signed can end in disaster. Business people tell me AssetCo used to have a sound reputation.

Bad management

Private companies, no matter how large, do go bust – either through misfortune or bad management. So they are not a stable or secure basis on which to build the provision of emergency services.

AssetCo and the LFB have admitted that all the capital's fire engines are no longer owned by either of them. They have become the property of the state-owned Lloyds banking group – owners of the Halifax.

As FBU general secretary Matt Wrack puts it: "Privatising emergency services is stupid and dangerous. The long, slow death of AssetCo is a perfect illustration of this."

Prostate cancer

Even a small change can be significant

One man dies every hour from prostate cancer in the UK alone

Olivia Munt, a control member in Derbyshire, explains why all men should understand the risks of prostate cancer

Prostate cancer kills more men than any other cancer. One man dies every hour from prostate cancer in the UK alone.

I've learned a lot about the disease from recent personal experience. My father, station manager David Stanley Munt, died on 12 May this year aged 50, after losing his 18-month battle with prostate cancer.

In the early stages of prostate cancer, symptoms may not usually become apparent because the prostate gland is so small that a small change may not be noticed. The prostate gland is approximately the size of a walnut.

Prostate problems

Benign prostate hyperplasia

– This usually affects men over the age of 55. The prostate gland slowly enlarges and may cause problems when passing urine, but this is not cancerous.

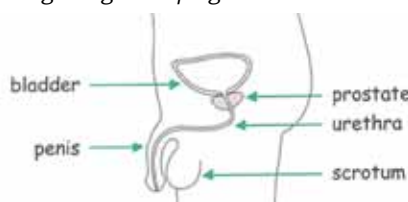
Prostatitis – This causes inflammation of the prostate glands and causes pain when passing urine, in the pelvis, genitals, back passage and during ejaculation.

Prostate cancer – Most men are usually diagnosed with prostate cancer over the

Symptoms

The symptoms to look for are:

- The prostate gland may become inflamed and uncomfortable making it more difficult to pass urine.
- Pain or blood when urine is passed.
- The feeling that you may need to rush to the toilet.
- Severe lower back or hip pain.
- Problems getting or keeping an erection.



Where is the prostate gland?

age of 60. However men can be affected at any point in their life.

Risk factors

There are a number of risk factors for prostate cancer:

Increase in age – the older you are the greater the chance of risk.

Family history – If a close relative has had prostate cancer

at a particularly young age then your risk may be higher.

Breast cancer in the family

– If a close female relative has breast cancer at an early age (under the age of 40) or any male has had breast cancer in your family the risk for prostate cancer will be greater.

Ancestry – Prostate cancer is more common in African males than those of Caribbean, white or Asian descent.

Diet – A diet high in animal fat and low in fruit, vegetables and fish may also increase risk.

Tests

There are three main tests that can be carried out to test for prostate cancer. The first is a rectal examination – also known as DRE: **digital rectal examination**. This is a simple rectal examination where your doctor will feel for any abnormal signs. These can include an enlarged, lumpy or hard prostate.

Another test is the **prostate**

specific antigen (PSA) test.

This is a simple blood test that will measure your prostate protein level. The higher the number the more advanced the prostate cancer may be. The PSA test can also be used to monitor the progress of prostate cancer and how effective the treatment might be. The PSA level can change at any time.

The other test is a **needle biopsy**. If a lump or hardening of the prostate is found after an initial rectal examination a specialist may then take a small sample of your prostate cells to be examined further. You will be given antibiotics for a few days after the biopsy to stop any infections.

More information

Confidential helpline
– 0800 074 8383

www.prostate-cancer.org.uk

The Prostate Cancer Charity
1st floor Cambridge House
100 Cambridge Grove
London W6 0LE

info@prostate-cancer.org.uk

In the early stages of prostate cancer, symptoms may not usually become apparent because the prostate gland is so small that a small change may not be noticed



Prostate cancer can affect men at any age – station manager David Munt died from it this year aged 50

Legal Beagle

Can they force me to retire?



Q I am a retained member. My employer has issued me with a notice of intention to retire, even though I do not reach 65 until November. Do I still have to retire in November?

A No. The default retirement age will be abolished from 1 October 2011. Therefore, even though your employer gave you notice before 6 April 2011, it cannot rely on this notice to dismiss you for retirement after 1 October 2011.

However, the employer may argue that it is objectively justified in dismissing you in November on the grounds of your age. The employer will have to identify a legitimate aim and demonstrate that your dismissal is proportionate to achieving that aim.

If you are still fit and able to carry out your duties and there have been no questions about your performance, an employer is likely to find it difficult to justify your dismissal.

Q A member has been off work suffering with stress that they say is being caused by issues at work. They have asked if they can sue the employer. Can they?

A Claims for work-related stress are difficult. The worker first has to prove that they have a psychiatric illness (the injury). Then they have to show:



- that their working environment posed a real risk of causing the illness and the employer knew (or ought to have known) that they were exposed to that risk;

- that their employer knew that the difficulties they faced were so severe as to create a risk of an imminent psychiatric illness. This might be by producing a doctor's report or being able to show that they have been off work before due to stress;

- that their employer failed in their duty of care towards them. This involves showing that the employer did not do everything that was reasonable in the circumstances to keep the worker safe from harm – a court will

look at how the employer dealt with any risks;

- that the harm they suffered was caused by their working environment and their employer's breach of the duty of care owed to them.

Q I have been left disabled as a result of an accident at work. I have heard of industrial injuries disablement benefit. How do I qualify to receive it?

A You are eligible for industrial injuries disablement benefit (IIDB) if you are disabled as a result of an accident at work or a disease caused by a job and if you were employed at the time

of the accident. You must also be defined as having at least 14% disablement.

The benefit is not means tested, is not subject to national insurance contributions and does not affect any other national insurance benefits such as employment and support allowance (previously called incapacity benefit).

However IIDB will affect income-related benefits such as income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit.

The amount you will get will depend on your level of disablement assessed by a doctor on a scale of one to 100. Disablement is assessed by comparison to a person of the same age and sex whose physical and mental condition is normal.

If a percentage assessment is made for less than 14%, providing it is registered at the time of assessment, it can be added to subsequent assessments in respect of further industrial accidents or disease. Even if each assessment is less than 14%, a payment of benefit will be triggered if, when added together, the assessments exceed 14%.

To apply for IIDB, 90 days must have elapsed since the accident. Application forms are available from any Jobcentre Plus. Staff there will commission a medical report.

Awards of benefit are made for the period you are expected to continue to suffer from the relevant loss of faculty. Awards can also be made for an indefinite period.

“The most important shot is the next one”

Golf

It took watch manager Kim Tierney a good few years to get round to taking up golf. But once she did, it soon became obvious there could be no going back.

Until four years ago, the nearest she had got to playing a round of golf was caddying “just the once” for husband Brian, who has been playing the game for more than 20 years.

Now she has gone from golf widow to multiple trophy winner and will take over the ladies captaincy at Branston golf club in Burton on Trent from March next year.

It all started when husband Brian – now retired from Leicestershire fire and rescue service – bought Kim a set of second-hand golf clubs. “I finally borrowed his old golfing waterproofs and spent a very harsh, cold, wet winter trying to put a second-hand 5

For control watch manager Kim Tierney, golf has become a real passion

wood, 7 iron and putter to good use. I just thought I’d give it a go and see how I got on,” says Kim. “And that was it really. I was completely hooked.”

Soon Kim, who now works in fire control for the West Midlands fire and rescue service, had bought her own clubs and

clothes and had free expert coaching close at hand: Brian was keen to pass on all he knew. Branston ladies club members also offered encouragement and support to the new convert.

It all paid off sooner than Kim could have imagined. “My aim in 2009/2010 was to concentrate on improving my game and reduce my 36 handicap. I played in my first competition at Bloxwich golf club in June 2010, in the Staffs ladies county league, bronze division. I was very apprehensive and felt out of my comfort zone, I hadn’t even played in a club competition before.”

She may have been a first-time competitor, but Kim’s results were certainly worth having. “I came in with a net 68, winning the Staffs ladies bronze division handicap bowl and reduced my handicap by two.

“The following weekend I was still on a high. We went on to win the husband and wife major at our own club. I wasn’t expecting two wins in one week. Winning a singles competition at an away club then a major at my own club spurred me on and in the following months.”

Success breeds success. This astonishing winning streak continued, as Kim went on to win several more club competitions. By the end of 2010 her handicap had been slashed to 28. Husband and golfing mentor Brian has a handicap of 19. The gap was narrowing ...

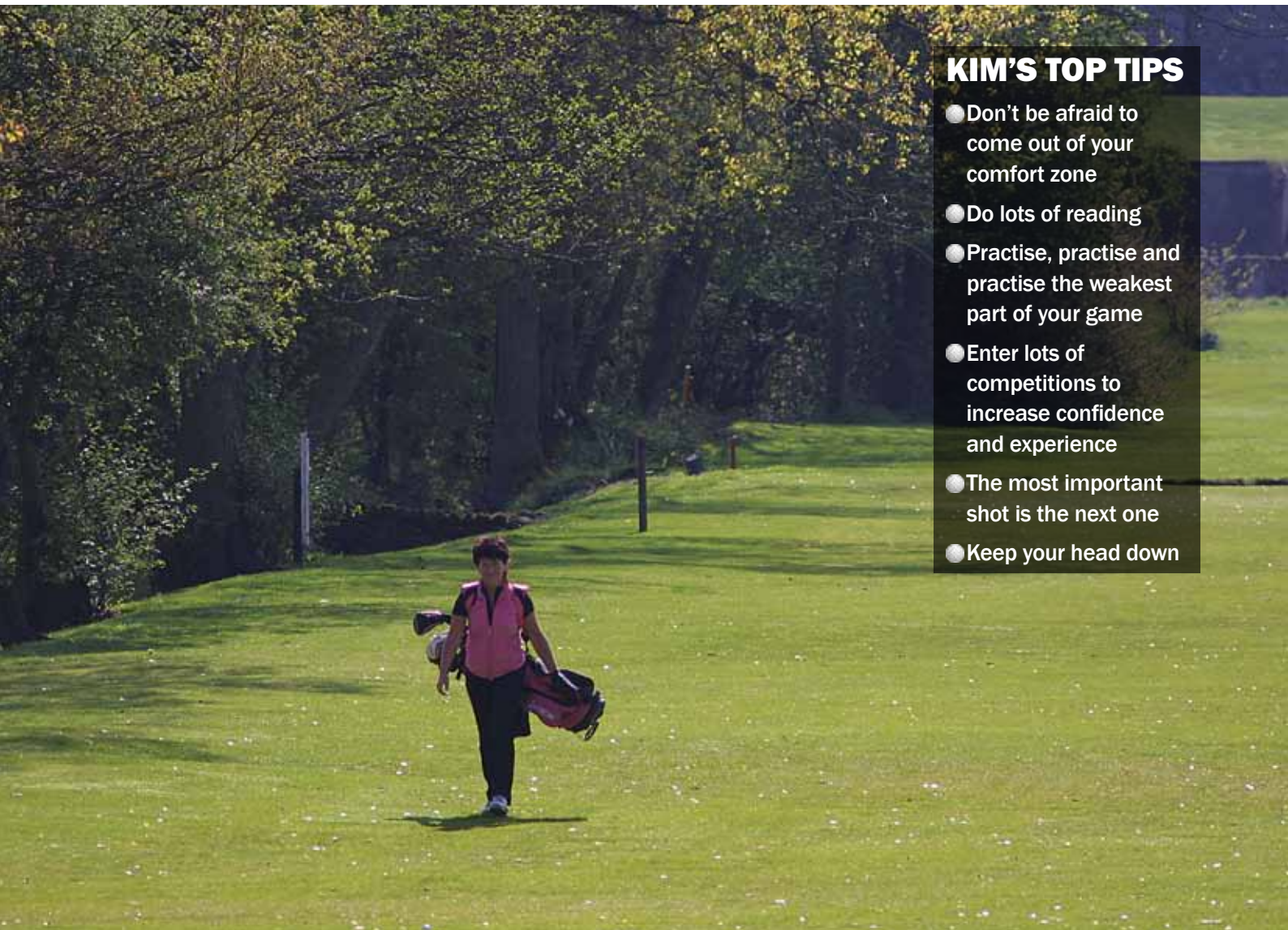
At the club Kim was getting talked about – in a good way – and was asked to be ladies vice captain in 2011. She was now back on shifts after a secondment – happy to be back in her own brigade, learning the ropes for next year’s captaincy and, crucially, playing more golf and poised to slash yet more points off her handicap.

Kim started a blog to keep friends, family



KIM TIERNEY

Kim Tierney took her time to get started with golf. But once she had, she progressed by leaps and bounds.



KIM'S TOP TIPS

- Don't be afraid to come out of your comfort zone
- Do lots of reading
- Practise, practise and practise the weakest part of your game
- Enter lots of competitions to increase confidence and experience
- The most important shot is the next one
- Keep your head down

and golfing enthusiasts up to speed with her progress. There's been a lot to report. She played for the first time in the club championship, held over two days in July.

"There are two prizes, best gross and best net. Being a high handicapper, the gross was out of my league but the net was achievable.

"I had a great two days coming in with 72 and 78 to win the best net. With a couple of other competitions under my belt, I then won my first club major on 27 August resulting in a handicap reduction to 22."

So that leaves just three points between Brian and Kim – and the year is not over yet. There are more competitions and matches to look forward to over the next

few months and major planning sessions with other committee members to finalise next year's competition

"This year has been quite a challenge for me," says Kim, who is glad to be back in the West Midlands as watch commander on A crew in fire control. "This has been the best part of coming back into the brigade, with the added advantage of being at home every day."

Not forgetting the chance to get out on the golf course more often – and maybe closing the handicap gap with husband and mentor Brian. Watch this space.

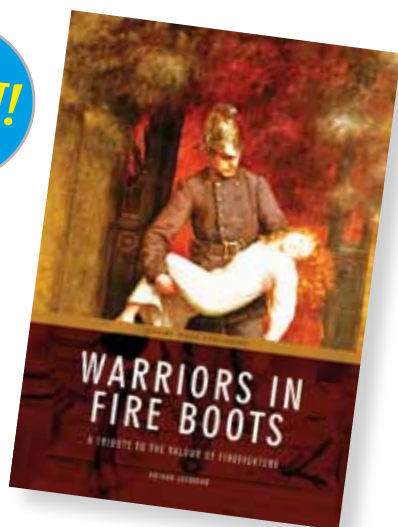
... <http://ladyviceblogatbranstongolfclub.blogspot.com>



Kim and Brian – the handicaps are converging

"I just thought I'd give it a go and see how I got on. And that was it really. I was completely hooked"

Prize quiz



Win Warriors in Fire Boots

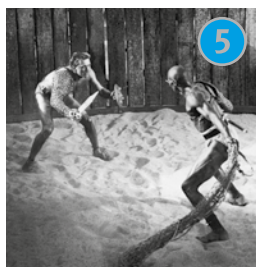
To win a copy of Arthur Lockyear's *Warriors in Fire Boots* please send your answers to the prize quiz by 31 October 2011 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (October 2011) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

1 Who was Andy Dufresne in the 1994 movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*?

- A. Tom Hanks
- B. Tim Robbins
- C. Tony LoBianco
- D. Tony Soprano

2 Which of these actors starred in the 1959 movie, *Some Like it Hot*?

- A. Tony Curtis
- B. Frank Sinatra
- C. Dean Martin
- D. Jerry Lewis



3 Who directed the 1994 movie, *Pulp Fiction*?

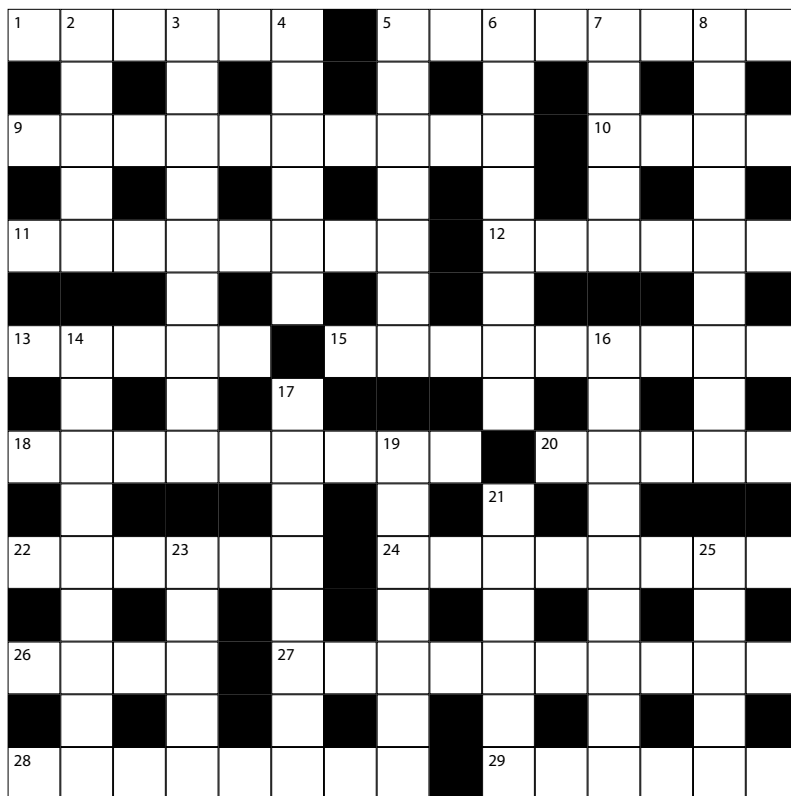
- A. Quentin Tarantino
- B. Martin Scorsese
- C. Francis Ford Coppola
- D. Sofia Coppola

4 What character did Humphrey Bogart play in the movie classic, *Casablanca*?

- A. Rick Tremain
- B. Rick Blaine
- C. Ricky Gervais
- D. Rick Martin

5 Who was *Spartacus* in the 1960 movie of the same name?

- A. Kirk Douglas
- B. Charlton Heston
- C. Richard Burton
- D. Burt Lancaster



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1, 22, 20** Measure of inflation the government thinks is too good to link our pensions to (6,6,5)
- 5** Rodent living in drains (5-3)
- 9** Created specially for the purpose/person (6-4)
- 10** Long, hollow conduit for gas, liquid or tobacco (4)
- 11** Woodwind instrument (8)
- 12** Dog house (6)
- 13** Flyer, or harbour guide (5)
- 15** Pharmacy, US-style (4-5)
- 18** Strengthen (or send more troops) (9)
- 20, 22** See 1 and 17
- 24** Dead-end road (3-2-3)
- 26** Cook in oven (4)
- 27** Inflammation of brain membranes (10)
- 28** Right-wing republican faction – or Mad Hatter's get-together (3-5)
- 29** City in Devon (6)

DOWN

- 2** The same as (5)
- 3** PM (9)
- 4** Mourn or regret – or song of such (6)
- 5** First course (7)
- 6** What's left in wake of RTA? (8)
- 7** North Yorkshire town with racecourse (5)
- 8** Fruit-bearing woody plant (5,4)
- 14** To make drunk, or drunk person (9)
- 16** Easy-peel citrus fruit (9)
- 17, 22, 20** Inferior inflation measure the government wants to link our pensions to (8,6,5)
- 19** One born within earshot of St Mary-le-Bow (7)
- 21** Quick look (6)
- 23** Inexpensive (5)
- 25** Not dead (5)

Last month's answers and winners



Crossword solution August/September

August/September quiz answers

- 1.** D – Burkina Faso
- 2.** A – Cape Farewell
- 3.** C – Fleet Street
- 4.** A – The Arctic Ocean
- 5.** D – Slovakia

Winner of the June/July quiz
Mr W McKee, County Down

Station Cat

Does my bum look too right wing in this?

Sound bite in the backside

“Human rights. My backside.” Which well known politician said that? Regular Station Cat readers will know that something so crass could only come from Brian Coleman, chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and, as it happens, sole owner and operator of a large and impressive backside. Even Coleman knew it wouldn’t go down well with a British audience, so he said it in an interview with Swedish television, which was not going to be broadcast here, and he used Finchley fire station as a backdrop. When the interview was over, he said to the camera crew with a smirk: “Was that too right wing for Swedish television?” The army of publicly funded PRs who follow him about, trying to curb his grosser excesses looked at each other miserably, but the reporter from Swedish television simply looked inscrutable. She’d got the sound bite she needed to confirm to her viewers that the British are a stupid, unthinking, reactionary lot.

Time for a reality check

But then, Mr Coleman’s sense of reality, never very strong, seems to have snapped entirely after the London riots. He told reporters that London’s fire service had everything it needed, and never had to call for help from other services. It was rubbish. Enfield was just one of the places where reinforcements

– both firefighters and equipment – had to be called in from outside the capital. “The brigade did not have enough fire engines, and other brigades came in to deal with incidents in Enfield and other places. The control room was overwhelmed with the number of calls, and did not have enough staff to deal with them all,” says FBU London region executive council member Ian Leahair. Coleman could have found that out with one phone call.

Master of restraint

But let us not keep banging on about Coleman, as though he’s the only pompous ass in London. His Conservative colleague Gareth Bacon recently began a letter to a 17-year-old constituent, Danny Hackett, “Dear Master Hackett”, explaining later: “I addressed you as Master because that is the correct title for you – you are, after all, a minor.” Warming to his theme, he added: “I suspect you have little or no experience of living apart from your parents, university, working for a living, supporting yourself, paying tax, having meaningful relationships, or raising a family. You have little or no practical experience of politics and no experience at all of public life.” Find the full



hilarious story on journalist David Hencke’s blog, at <http://davidhencke.wordpress.com/>

Smoke alarm myth lives on

Now, here’s a revelation. Apparently smoke alarms don’t rescue anyone from fires. It isn’t true that you can cut back on firefighters and equipment, just so long as you make sure more buildings have smoke alarms. What, you knew that already? You should have told the politicians, then. They have only just learned it, from a recent BBC radio investigation which discovered that nearly half the fire deaths in 2010 happened in a property with a working fire alarm. At the risk of spelling out the obvious, the union’s London regional organiser Ben Sprung, in the London FBU magazine, attacks the idea “that if we increase preventative work, then there is not a need for as many costly fire engines and firefighters.” It means, he writes, that “a policy that should be about saving life and property works to put lives at risk”.

Go to work in a jag

Mid and West Wales fire and rescue service wants to halve the number of firefighters it employs – to save money, it says. Oddly, though, all top officers are to keep their splendid leased cars, costing £31,657.49 last year. The cars, says the fire service, are essential. Chief fire officer Richard Smith apparently can’t do his job without a BMW 3 series (“It is

Chief who wants to halve number of his firefighters drives a council tax payer funded BMW 3 series to emergencies

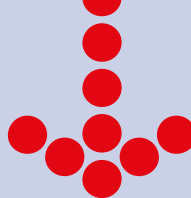


frankly awesome ... it ensures that mile after mile of monotonous grey motorway passes in a silken cocoon of refinement ... it can cope with four generously proportioned adults easily” – *What Car.*) His deputy Paul Bates requires a Jaguar XF at an annual cost, including lease, maintenance and servicing, but excluding fuel, of £6,276.69 a year to the authority. (“Fuses contemporary sports car styling and dynamics with the refined performance and comfort of a luxury saloon” – Jaguar website.) Two senior officers have Audi A6s, and another has to make do with a BMW 1 series. These figures had to be extracted from the service under a freedom of information request by the *Llanelli Star*, after it heard of firefighters’ anger at attempts to restructure the watch system at Llanelli fire station.

Blues, twos, and a BMW

Why do these bosses cling to their luxurious transport? Simple, says Jacqui Maunder, the fire service’s head of corporate communications, in her FoI response: “The roles of these officers require extensive travel around the service area, as well as nationally. The vehicles are also provided for the officers concerned to respond to emergencies.” Well, naturally. If Station Cat’s home was burning down, she wouldn’t want a top fire officer turning up in any old Ford Focus, would she? Makes all the difference, the deputy chief having a Jag.

25-year badges



Dave Saleem (l), white watch, Batley, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Wakefield divisional secretary Billy Delve with watch colleagues looking on



Pete Garrow (l), green watch, Kirkby, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade health and safety co-ordinator Gary Bennett



Kevin Gilbert (l), white watch, Bedminster, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Jackson



Chris Slater (l), white watch, Rochdale, receives his 25-year badge from union learning rep Shaun O'Neill. Looking on: watch colleagues (l-r) Paul Rourke, John Crossley, Chris Watson, Mike Turner, Russ Fielding and Paul Wilkinson



From left: **Kevin Williams, Chris George, Andy Davies** and (far right) **Roger Kirkwood**, Malvern, Hereford and Worcester, all receive their 25-year badges from FBU general secretary Matt Wrack



Larry Rowlands (2nd r), white watch, Kensington, Liverpool, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Aimi Molloy, accompanied by members of white watch



Dave Fenton (l), white watch, Batley, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Wakefield divisional secretary Billy Delve with watch colleagues looking on



Martin Combs (l), Hove, East Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Simon Herbert



Adrian Mantle (l), white watch, Bedminster, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Jackson



FF Millard (l), white watch, Hove, East Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Simon Herbert



Ian Jowett (l), white watch, Batley, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Wakefield divisional secretary Billy Delve with watch colleagues looking on

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REGION 5 Greater Manchester, Lancs, Isle of Man, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire

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REGION 6 Derbys, Notts, Lincs, Leics, Northants

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REGION 7 West Mids, Staffs, Warks, Hereford & Worcester, Salop

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REGION 8 Mid and West Wales, North Wales, South Wales

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REGION 9 Herts, Beds, Cambs, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk

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REGION 10 London

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REGION 11 Kent, Surrey, Sussex

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REGION 12 Bucks, Berks, Hants, Oxon, Isle of Wight

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REGION 13 Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, Avon, Gloucs, Wilts, Dorset

158 Muller Road, Horfield,
Bristol, BS7 9RE
0117 935 5132, 13rs@fbu.org.uk

Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Membership Secretary or any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE 0808 100 6061

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

Please send photo prints or digital files to: Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE or firefighter@fbu.org.uk. Please include **full details** for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.